

May 19, 2008

6:00 p.m.

ADOT Presentation on the Proposed South Mountain Freeway to the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee

Tim Tait, ADOT, gave an overview of the South Mountain Freeway Study through a PowerPoint presentation, which included information regarding the study's purpose and need, growth, and schedule of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Ben Spargo, HDR, provided technical information about the initial alternatives and what the CAT progressed through to make a recommendation to ADOT on the Western Section Alternative, profile options, potential impacts. Tim also provided an overview of the next series of meetings of the CAT and timing of the DEIS. Tim explained that after the September CAT meeting, the team expects there may be a break until the release of the DEIS; however, the team is unable to predict when that break will end. The study team will hold as many meetings as needed for the CAT after the break and DEIS is released to discuss concerns about the draft document.

Representative McComish was in attendance.

Questions from the Village Planning Committee Members:

- Comment: Member expressed concern about canceling the Lakewood HOA meeting. There are ongoing concerns and questions about the wells and displacement. Also, comment about the freeway going around South Mountain, they know it's going through. If they do go along Pecos, it will destroy homes and will have an impact to property values.
- Question: Is this going to go along with the I-10 improvement around the Broadway curve? It's going to be tricky going around a one-way (Broadway curve). Are they related in any way (express local lane concept)?
- ADOT Response - They are separate projects, but are both part of the regional freeway system. No one solution to the traffic issues. The improvement on Broadway and the South Mountain go hand in hand. It's a network of freeways that make the system work. Can't do enough to I-10 alone to get what our community needs – can only make the Broadway curve so wide.
- Question: I-10 corridor won't solve everything?
- ADOT Response - It will help solve the problem.
- Comment: 40th Street and Cottonwood Lane – impacts of a depressed is too great
- ADOT Response - ADOT doesn't support a depressed freeway at this area.

- Question: If you were to build a depressed configuration, why couldn't you just put aqueducts over the freeway and let it flow?
- ADOT Response – We looked at those options, but with the bridges, it would require the depression to go deeper. We are trying to keep the flow level the same to the Gila River Indian Community, along with all the water hitting the freeway, needing pump stations to push water out of the freeway.
- Question: How many lanes are being evaluated?
- ADOT Response – 10 lanes are being evaluate, but only 3 lanes are funded for construction. If it is constructed, and if there is a need for future expansion, there will be capacity within the median for additional traffic lanes. Current funding only for standard freeway, 3 lanes with auxiliary lanes.
- Question: If you look at the Phoenix to Tucson growth, all this growth is coming up to their neighborhood at the Broadway curve. Even at 40th and Pecos, buses that are there, how many from Maricopa are using those buses? He believes we are so set on a 1982 report that we aren't even looking at the growth going south.
- ADOT Response – Explained the long-range planning efforts of the Hidden Valley Framework Study is looking at new freeways, parkways and arterial street system south of the Phoenix metropolitan area (show study area map).
- Question: Question on the process of the EIS itself, won't know what's in the report until it is actually out – who is writing the report then?
- ADOT Reponse - There are many groups are writing the EIS, and anything can happen, almost immediately, and we won't know for sure what is going into the document until it is actually out. It's a fluid process and changes can happen.
- Question: Can pieces of the DEIS come out so it's easier to digest?
- ADOT Response – We have to adhere to Federal guidelines on the release of the DEIS. Once we submit the entire document, FHWA reviews for legal sufficiency. What we have done with the CAT is review the technical summary reports which is a very firm foundation of the material contained in the DEIS. If the GRIC changes their mind, as an example, the direction of the DEIS could change rapidly.
- Question: If the only one outstanding issue is the Traditional Cultural Property issue, and that the only holdup, then why are there so many public meetings, etc.?
- ADOT Response – everything that comes out in these meetings, hearings, can affect what could come out in the DEIS. There are current updates, graphic

updates, etc., and the TPC issue is a much larger issue.

- Question: What is the status on ADOT's discussion with GRIC?
- ADOT Response: ADOT has ongoing discussions with the GRIC on a number of transportation issues, including the proposed South Mountain Freeway and I-10. The Community has made a decision against putting the freeway on tribal lands.
- Question: Question on the decision-making aspect of this process. At some point if it is a build or no-build, at some point all of this will come forward and come to a local body on if this gets funded and built. It's not the City of Phoenix, the Governor's office, or ADOT...it's MAG that makes the decision on this and they will need to make the decision on funding. Is that statement still true, and can you explain who MAG is (and who it isn't)?
- ADOT Response: The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is a quasi-governmental organization that represents all the government and tribal governments in Maricopa County. They make most of the decisions on transportation in Maricopa County – whether to fund transportation and freeway funding through the ½ cent sales tax. Difficulty is MAG decides not to fund a freeway; FHWA and ADOT could go out and try to find funding to build something anyway. MAG is over regional planning and distribution of funding for projects. 101 miles of new freeway has been built, but doesn't quite match the growth we have seen statewide. MAG also oversees the regional planning of buses and light rail.
- Comment: The Village planning committee does not make the decision, Stanton doesn't make that decision, City of Phoenix doesn't make that decision, but it is a regional decision.
- Questions: I thought there was a slide that showed that ADOT and FHWA make the decision.
- ADOT Response: That is correct, ADOT and FHWA make the decision whether to build or not build the freeway. MAG makes the determination of what gets funded.

Questions from the audience

- Greta Rogers – Statement that she has been working on this for the last 6.5 years. Question on the projected cost of the project?
- ADOT Response: 1.7 billion dollars through the end of construction.

- Question: When was the DEIS submitted to the FHWA?
- ADOT Response: The DEIS is submitted to FHWA as sections are developed and revised with updates. It's an ongoing review cycle.
- Comment: When ADOT submitted the DEIS, I can't believe a major construction project didn't have hydrological, archeological sections, etc., with no impacts in 1985 to now, which are at build-out. You talk about value of time and nobody's time is worth 1.7 billion as an 18-wheeler bypass. This should be a parkway with limited axel size. You have as an agency expressed gross extreme malfeasance and irresponsible planning and conduct when planning a project on a something that has been on a dotted line on a piece of paper, and paid HDR over 12 million dollars and still don't have a engineering document.
- Comment: I'm Eve Morris. I live in Lakewood and wants everyone to know that everyone is going to be affected. One of the interests of ADOT is time tax – every criminal on the west side of Ahwatukee is going to be able to go on the freeway and rob our houses and drive back using the freeway. Also, on the wells. ADOT has given us written agreements that the wells will be moved, but she doesn't think that the wells can be just moved. Concerned about being 10 minutes away from 51st Avenue and Lower Buckeye. Why was the Lakewood meeting canceled?
- ADOT Response: The CAT meeting is the best method of getting information, and as you can see based on the presentation shown here tonight, there isn't anything new to say other than what is in the DEIS.
- Question: How can the interests of the Ahwatukee community count as much as the GRIC?
- ADOT Response: You are making the assumption that they don't, and I would disagree.
- Comment : I'm a resident that has been involved in the community for 15 years. Difficulty of continuing to move the release date of the DEIS is the frustration of not knowing what is going to happen. I feel like a renter, not a homeowner and this is not a rental community. If they are going to bulldoze homes, why not start letting us know now. I'd like to make improvements to my home, but I'm not sure what's going to happen. Difficult that the timing is so fluid and he wants to see the schedule gets compressed somehow.
- Question: I'm John Rodriguez and I have a question for Mr. Tait. Why did ADOT cancel the Lakewood HOA meeting? Lakewood is a community with over 3,000 residents (John shows email that Tim Tait sent).

- ADOT Response: The decision was made by ADOT management to try to focus the public on the CAT meetings.
- Question: Who at ADOT had the ultimate decision to cancel the meeting?
- ADOT Response: Matt Burdick was the one who made the decision
- Question: Where is Matt tonight?
- ADOT Response: Probably at home with his kids.
- Comment: At home with his kids when there are 3,000 residents who want to know information and answers about traffic studies, air quality, freeway design, homes in the ROW, continued increase of freeway construction (above, below ground). Can't say there is no new information, when we are discussing new information at each CAT meeting. Can we reschedule this meeting with ADOT and the community?
- ADOT Response: At this time, ADOT is focusing their attention on the CAT meetings.
- Question: Is that a no?
- ADOT Response: We will focus on the CAT meetings for those discussions and topics.
- Question: Why did you say no to my community and yes to others on the CAT, such as Foothills Club West?
- ADOT Response: Because there was a change in decision in the last couple of months.
- Question: We talked about this being proposed in the 80s and what is being proposed now with respect to 10 lanes now, 6 lanes in the 80s, and obtained ROW for the 6-lane configuration. Seems like the team doesn't have the space to build what they need.
- ADOT Response: MAG changed the footprint of what a new freeway should be. It was extended from the 1980s plans to today's plans. That affected the anticipated ROW limits that guided some development in the community.
- Comment – It's a dramatic impact because now they don't have enough space and with 6 lanes, that would be a better option.
- Question: You show 800 or so takings with the below grade option, have you studied under ground storage tanks to figure out what the takings would be then?

This concept should be taken to a full design.

- ADOT Response: The study team went into detail at the February 2008 CAT meeting regarding what underground storage tanks would look like. They would reduce the retention needed, and approximately 200 homes fewer homes would be impacted. We could show slides at a later time,.
- Comment: I felt a lot of information was omitted from that slide.
- Question: Is it EIS standard to not study the actual affects of construction on the community, which doesn't affect if it should be built or not, or the scraping of the mountain, but will affect the community. You're not studying the affects of constructing this freeway on the community.
- ADOT Response: Some of those aspects will come at a later date. There will be studies to identify how to move the well, pipe the well, or removing the well completely.
- Comment – All of this is done after the ROD?
- ADOT Response: Yes, but the discussions would take place in the DEIS. It doesn't make sense to do all the implementation work before a decision is made and this is a Federal decision process that we have to follow.
- Comment: I think all aspects should be looked at.
- Comment: I'm Joe Dobins. Who is reviewing the work that Ben and his team [HDR] are doing? I find the project cost for the below ground profile hard to believe. As a public organization, your obligation is to have your engineers work reviewed by the public. Aqueducts as an example – wants a design team to review HDR's analysis and is this being proposed?
- ADOT Response: ADOT, FHWA, and the community reviews this material. –
- Question: Is there an outside engineering firm that can review because I have a hard time believing what HDR is showing. Need to discuss peak oil. What are MAG and/or ADOT doing in their projection analysis on peak oil? It's happening now. Highly recommends everybody here to go home and Google it. Don't believe th traffic projections for 2030. There is going to be less and less traffic on our freeways. Look at the traffic on the weekends. This is a real issue.
- Question: Is it true that the separation of these funds (transit, etc.) is constrained by the voters.
- Yes, absolutely. The funding percentages are determined by Prop 400.

- Question: And is there a pile of money that you are restricted by?
- ADOT Response: Yes, there is.
- Question: You say the study could come out in 2009, is a decision going to come then or estimated time frame on a decision?
- ADOT Response: There is no projected time frame on the decision.
- Comment: I recommend the no build on Pecos.
- Question: I'm David Catreras. There are some very volatile comments here and I'd like to know what is ADOT going to do to handle these concerns?
- ADOT Response: The study team takes these very seriously and takes them back to the study team to analysis and look for additional items to study (the example of lighting was given). The public comments throughout the study have influenced the environmental report – you won't see David's comments on page 82 – but these things are considered and all the public input helps the process. That's why we are careful about documenting it and moving it up the line.
- Question from Village Planning Committee Member: Are the meeting minutes of all these meeting in the DEIS?
- ADOT Response: No, but the team identifies what happens in the meetings. All comment obtained through the public comment period during the public hearings will be included in the Final EIS.
- Comment: When I moved here, I was surprised not to see trains, etc., and since he has been here he hasn't seen any studies on trains (besides light rail) just more freeways. It only seems that we are studying freeways for 25 years on a study alone. Why not do it on the 1 cent sales tax and build these things. In Chicago they have trains everywhere, and how come they don't have them here? If we had a train it would be smoother and we are wasting millions of dollars. New York is even worse in that traffic is even worse, and they have trains and subways. We need more mass transit
- ADOT Response: Over the last 25 years, voters in Maricopa County rejected mass transit programs. ValTrans as an example. 2004 voter initiative did have a light rail component and that was the first time this option was selected beyond buses. ADOT would absolutely agree that it doesn't make much sense not having mass transit options and that METRO is the agency responsible for that. We are looking at high-speed rail from Phoenix to Tucson, but not in the city. It can't be just one system, has to all four and a sensible mix.

- Comment: Most of the studies are done on the highway and the only thing recent is the light rail component. We should study what Chicago has done, everything is above ground, etc.
- ADOT Response: Provided METRO's website and explained that we are engaged in several studies on I-10 looking at rail.
- Comment: I'm Mary Johnson. Is the DEIS looking at the impact on businesses, schools and children. Concerned about the impacts on air quality to children, stagnant water impacts too? The highway is too close to children.
- Comment: I'm Anna Torres and I came here to get more information, but I'm disappointed there is no new information. A couple of weeks ago somebody was taking pictures of the homes in our neighborhood and when asked, I was told they were from ADOT acquisitions. I found out homes have been purchased in the area. Why are they purchasing homes now?
- ADOT Response: Unfortunately, I can't explain why they were taking pictures of your home. But, we have purchased homes in the corridor (within the ground-level footprint) that meet specific criteria. The people who live there have to have a compelling reason to sell their home, such as hardship.
- Comment: Why don't you buy now and make a decision now for people in Lakewood. Here you are canceling meetings.
- ADOT Response: When did you move into your home?
- Citizen Response: 2000 –
- ADOT Response: And were you aware of the footprint of the freeway
- Citizen Response: Yes I was aware of the freeway, and I heard they were going to start purchasing homes in 2006 and then all of a sudden it stopped.
- ADOT Response: Right now, the earliest we can start moving dirt is 2012. That requires time for design, ROW acquisition, and construction.
- Question: If it is a no build, then what happens to the homes ADOT purchased?
- ADOT Response: Then ADOT starts a process for selling those homes back.
- Question: Has ADOT studied the impacts of the freeway on the high school, specifically air quality?

- ADOT Response: Yes, and through the air quality analysis, which looks at air quality locally and regionally.
- Comment by Doug Cole – Just wanted to let people know that the Lakewood Community was platted before the freeway was conceived. Lakewood is different because it was platted before a line was on a map for the freeway.

No further public comments or questions received.